

Angels Flight  
Southwest corner of Third & Hill Streets  
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County  
California

HABS No. CAL-337

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13.

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
1000 Geary Street  
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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ANGELS FLIGHT

Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California

ADDRESS: Southwest corner of Third and Hill Streets  
OWNER: Community Redevelopment Agency  
USE: Cable Railway

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

This is the last remaining cable railway in the City of Los Angeles. It is significant both because of this and because of its nature as a Landmark, so designated by the Cultural Heritage Board of Los Angeles, August 6, 1962.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Angels Flight was the idea of Colonel J. W. Eddy, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1895, having been prior to this time a school teacher, a State Representative in Illinois, a Civil War veteran, and a miner whose mine had been closed by a sheriff's sale. He was not a young man when he arrived in Los Angeles.

Colonel Eddy became interested in a residential area which was perched on a hill overlooking the growing business district on Broadway. Known at that time as Olive Heights, it is today designated as Bunker Hill. Since the 1880's, people had been making their homes in ever increasing numbers on the hill, but there remained almost no way of getting up the hill other than by foot or horse and buggy.

Colonel Eddy petitioned the City Council on May 10, 1901, asking for a franchise to operate a railway to run from Hill Street to Clay and thence up to Olive Street. The petition was granted----with the

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stipulation that he build a stairway on the opposite side of the tunnel to "prevent the Angeles from having a monopoly on the means of ascent".

Construction began on August 2nd, of 1901 and was finished by December of the same year. Grand Opening day, December 31, all passengers rode free for the day. At the top of the run, punch was served by the ladies who resided nearby on Olive Heights.

As completed back in 1901, there was no fancy arch which has since become so famous, but a series of arched pipes which each held a small electric light globe. The incline followed the contour of the land first up to Clay Street, then up to Olive. The two little cars, known then as now as "Olivet" and "Sinai", were painted white. During 1905, the right-of-way was rebuilt on a tressle on a direct incline of 33% grade. This over-passed Clay Street, which at that time had considerably more traffic than today.

The Hill Street entry arch was added in 1908, and the notorious lettering B.P.O.E. was added to the structure in June of the following year----as a guide to Elks who were attending a national convention in the club house at the top of the flight. The little sign was never taken down, and stories have been circulated about the Elks' connection with the cable railway. There has never been a connection; and the sign has become part and parcel of the arch design.

An added feature of the incline was an observation tower which was known as Angels Rest----or to some as Angels "Roost". Although before 1917 high buildings had reduced the view down to apartment walls, the tower continued to remain. In 1914, it had been condemned, as its footings were settling noticeably. Twenty years later it was removed.

In all its years of operation, there has been only one fatal accident on the railway, although on several occasions it has ceased to run because of necessary repairs. In 1913, damage to the cable allowed one of the cars to go careening back down the incline. Passengers were badly shaken but only one was fatally injured, and this because she had jumped from the car.

Contrary to common belief, Angeles Flight was not the only cable railway in the city. Several blocks to the north, Court Flight opened a year or

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so later; ran up Court Street from Broadway to Hill. Another Street Cable Railway ran out Second Street from Spring to the Belmont Hotel, but this came to an end in 1889 when it was destroyed by a flood. Court Flight operated until 1944. There were several other cable lines in and around downtown which opened in the 1880's, but all were discontinued in 1895. In the Mount Washington area another famous cable railway, the Mt. Washington and Los Angeles Railway began operation in 1909 and was abandoned in 1919.

During the years, Angel's Flight has been cited by the Native Daughters of the Golden West, and most recently by the Cultural Heritage Board of Los Angeles. It is difficult to place the finger on just why so many Angelinos feel so sentimental toward this charming relic of a bygone era which is patronized by residents of the Bunker Hill area, tourists, and always a smattering of those who just like to ride the little fenicular.

#### EQUIPMENT

The railway, as it exists today, consists of two small cars, known as "Olivet" and "Sinai" both of which are painted a garish black and orange, in contrast to their white appearance of fifty years ago. Except at the point of passing, where the tracks divide, three rails with one rail in common serve to guide the little cars upward. Although perfectly balanced, there is a ten-horse power motor at the top of the flight. Usually the ascending car carries the bulk of the passengers, while the descending car has the fewer passengers. Those who board the car at the Hill Street entrance, simply alight and take a seat, waiting for the buzzer to announce the beginning of their "Flight". The fare box, engineer and the mechanism is located in what is left of the old pavilion at the top of the incline. Although technically a railway, it operates under an elevator license.

In the course of its existence, it has been operated by owners who have cared for their railway like a boy for his model train. Colonel Eddy owned and ran it from 1901 until 1912. He sold it to the Funding Company on May 12, 1912, and in 1914 it became the property of the Continental Securities Company. This group remained in sole ownership

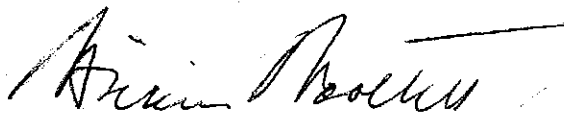
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until 1946, when they liquidated their assets, and its engineer R. M. Moore bought it outright, and continued to run it until he was 85. He sold to Lester B. Moreland and Byron Linville in August of 1952, who since sold it to the Community Redevelopment Agency.

#### REFERENCES

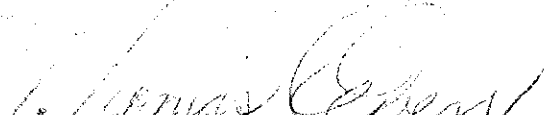
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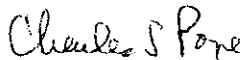
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September 1963

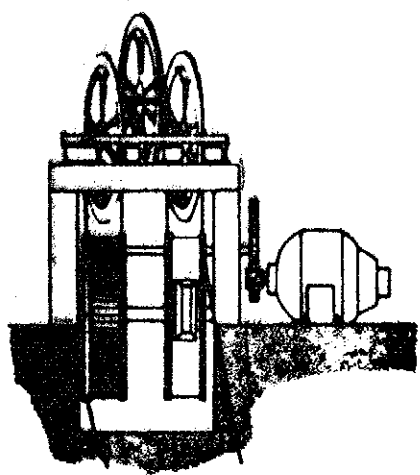
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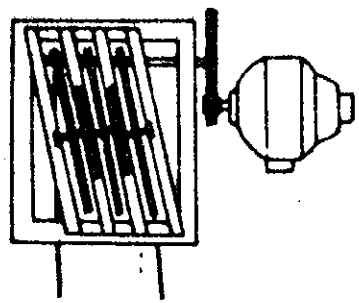
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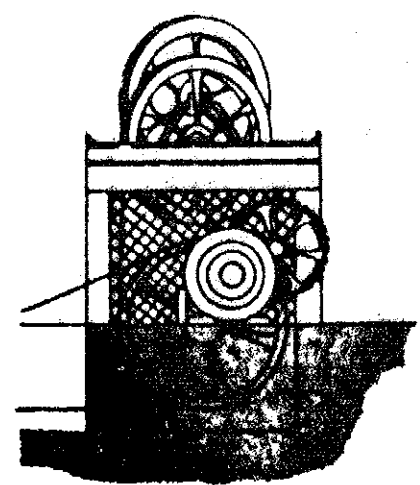
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FRONT



TOP



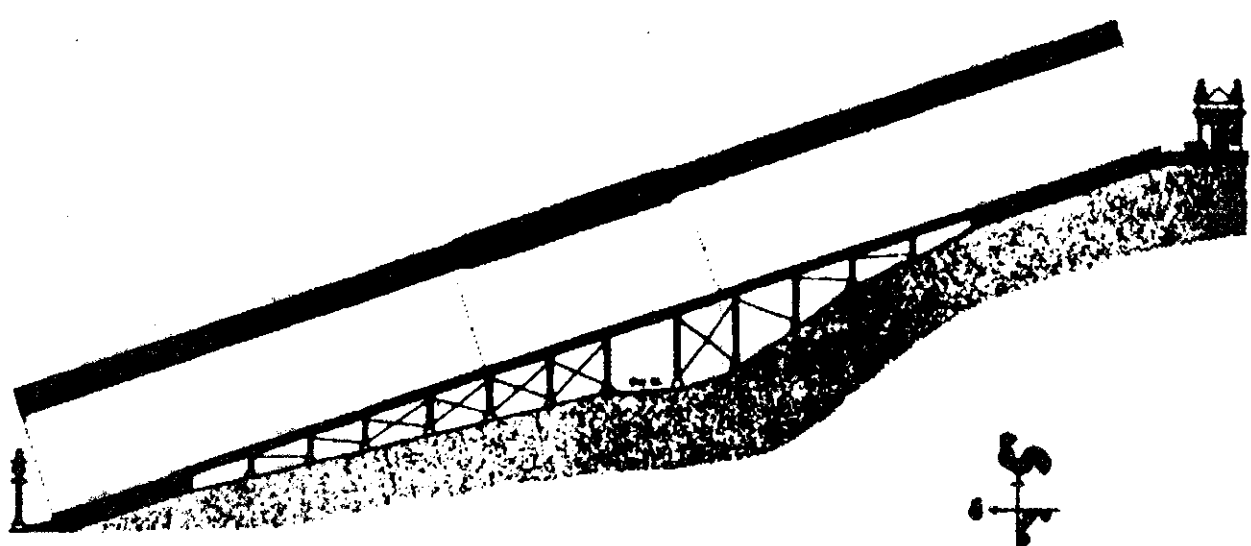
SIDE

# Angels Flight

Cable Drive



R. D. 1961

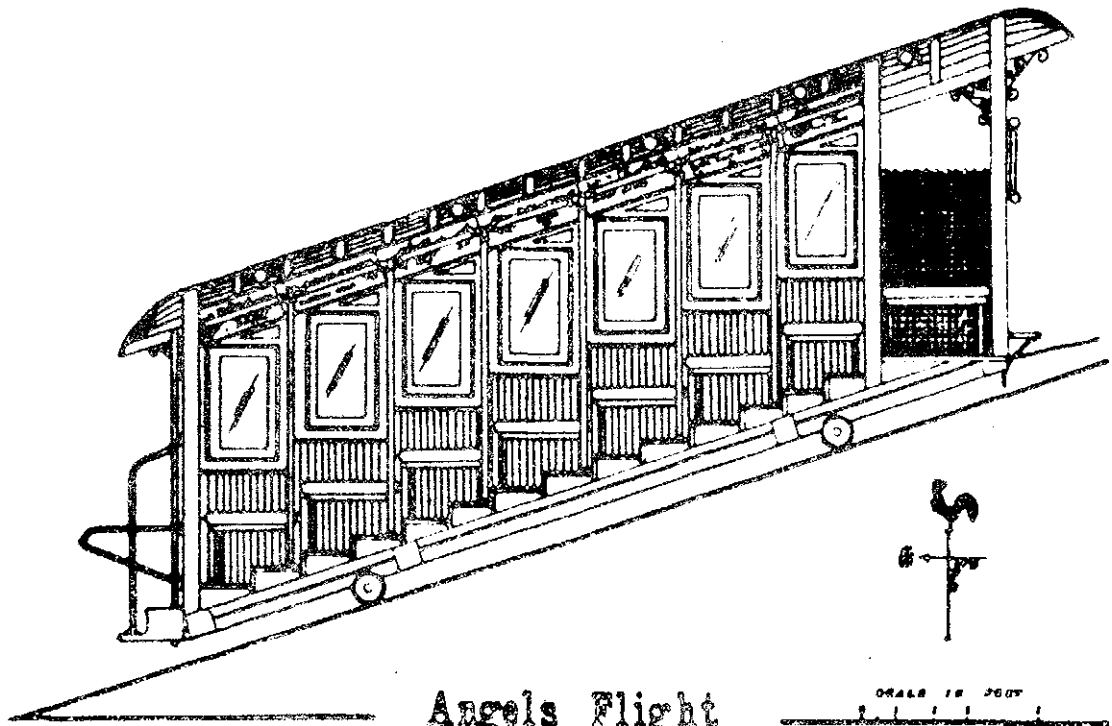


# Angels Flight

Elevation and Plan of Track



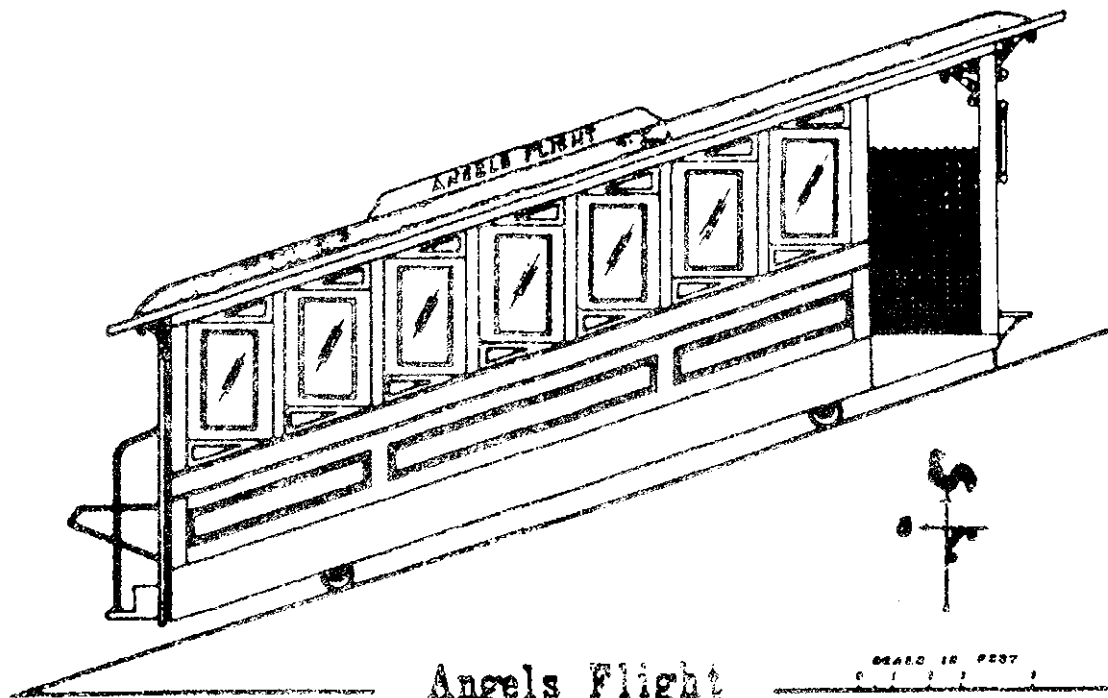
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Angels Flight  
Interior Section

SCALE IN FEET

N. D. 1003



Angels Flight  
Exterior Side Elevation

SCALE IN FEET

N. D. 1003